



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting
its participation
at the Executive Committee Meeting (EXCO)**

**Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary
Association (CPA)**

**London, United Kingdom
April 27 to 30, 2016**

Report

Ms. Alexandra Mendès M.P. attended the EXCO meeting in London, United Kingdom on behalf of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association from April 27 – 30, 2016. Those Members of the CPA Executive Committee in attendance were: Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury MP – CPA Chairperson (Bangladesh); Hon. Shirley M. Osborne MLA, Vice Chairperson (Montserrat); Hon. Request Muntanga MP – CPA Treasurer (Zambia); Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga MP – Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chairperson (Uganda).

Africa Region: Hon. Thandi Modise MP (South Africa); Hon. Machana Ronald Shamukuni MP (Botswana); Hon. Mutimura Zeno MP (Rwanda); Hon. Themba Msibi MP (Swaziland); Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka MP (Cameroon); Rt Hon. Umar Buba Jibril MP (Nigeria).

Asia Region: Hon. Mian Tariq Mehmood MPA (Punjab, Pakistan); Hon. Imran Ahmad MP (Bangladesh); Hon. Thilanga Sumathipala MP (Sri Lanka).

Australia Region: Hon. Kezia Purick MLA (Northern Territory, Australia); Hon. Russell Paul Wortley MLC (South Australia); Mrs. Vicki Dunne MLA (Australian Capital Territory).

British Islands & Mediterranean Region: Hon. Derek Thomas MLC (St Helena); Rt. Hon Sir Alan Haselhurst MP (United Kingdom); Hon. Carmelo Abela MP (Malta).

Canada Region: Hon. Alexandra Mendès MP (Canada Federal); Hon. George Qulaut MLA (Nunavut, Canada).

Caribbean, Americas & Atlantic Region: Hon. Farrel Smithen (Nevis); Hon. Michael Peyrefitte MP (Belize).

India Region: Dr Charnjit Singh Atwal MLA (Punjab, India); Shri P. P. Chaudhary MP (Lok Sabah, India); Dr Sitasaran Sharma MLA (Madhya Pradesh, India).

Pacific Region: Mr Paul Foster-Bell MP (New Zealand); Hon. Tutai Tura MP (Cook Islands); Mr Nafotoa Talaimanu Ketu MP (Samoa).

South East Asia Region: Hon. Datuk S K Devamany MP (Perak, Malaysia); Mr Lim Biow Chuan MP (Singapore); Hon. Dato' Noraini Ahmad MP (Malaysia).

GENERAL COMMENTS

1. This was a first experience of the CPA's Executive Committee for both Speaker Qulaut and Ms. Mendès. Having been given an overall briefing on what to expect, there is a fundamental issue with lack of institutional memory when one only relies on the participation and involvement of elected representatives. This only reinforced the need for staff to attend the EXCO Meetings.

2. This was also the first EXCO meeting for Mr. Akbar Khan, the newly¹ appointed Secretary General (henceforth, SG). He was extremely well prepared, he had taken the time to approach all members of EXCO by phone and/or email before the meeting, and he gave an impression of confidence and competence that was quite refreshing, per experienced members of EXCO.

3. Staff members from headquarters were invited to attend almost all meetings. This brings out again the point of insisting that current rules not allowing for country delegations to be accompanied by at least one permanent staff should be changed.

HIGHLIGHTS OF DISCUSSIONS

Day 1 – General meeting

Much time was spent on the *Minutes* from the previous meeting. After discussion it was decided that minutes should reflect only the general gist of an agenda item discussed, any motion it may generate and the result of said motion.

The SG presented a report on the state of the organisation, as he found it:

Developments around the estate of the late Dr. Shija, former Secretary General. It appears that the last procedures involving the ex-gratia payment have been cleared by the Charities Commission and that final compensation will be made to the Shija family as soon as HMRC rule on tax-liability issues .²

Financial strength of the CPA: a sound position from which to start reinvesting in programmes led by our many branches.

Human resources: a dedicated and hard-working team in its majority; need for continued on-the-job training and updating; obvious need for other sets of skills to offer more and better programming to branches. More on this on the *Business Plan*.

In preparation for the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference – to be held from September 1st to 10th 2016, in Dhaka (Bangladesh) – it was decided that HQ would put in place an accelerated process for the election of the first Small Branches chairperson.

Day 1 – Finance Subcommittee meeting

Request Muntanga, CPA's treasurer, brought up the issue of CPA's legal status in the UK, a subject that has been a recurring point of contention since it was debated at the 2014 CPC in Cameroun. There seems to be a strong desire from the Africa Region to take the CPA out of the British legal sphere³, the SG informs us that more on the subject will be discussed when we get to his proposed Business Plan.

¹ January 2016

² This ex-gratia payment became necessary when it was made known to the Coordinating Committee and EXCO that Dr. Shija didn't hold a life insurance policy.

³ As a charity, CPA has the most advantageous fiscal situation, exempting it of all levels of taxation.

On the *Business Plan*: the SG introduces a proposal to proceed with major management reforms. He asks the Finance Subcommittee to endorse his request for an independent consultant (three tenders are presented) to look at:

Human resources: overall performance, job descriptions vs. organogram, pay-scale;

Programme investments: determine branches' needs towards developing a more results-oriented value-for-money on meeting said needs;

IT requirements and upgrades: Headquarters are woefully outdated in technological tools. Consultant to evaluate current needs and future trends;

Full structural review: from determining office space requirements to potential changes in legal status.

The Subcommittee discussed, at length, both the scope of the Plan and the consultants who offered tenders.

It was decided that the SG should proceed with a formal request to the full EXCO to proceed with the Business Plan.

General Meeting

1. Wrapping up this mid-year meeting, the day began by approving the two Subcommittees' reports.

2. The upcoming CPC in Dhaka was discussed and Dr. Chaudhury (current Chairperson) gave us a report on the security situation in Bangladesh (stable), the measures her government had taken to ensure all delegates felt protected, and the state of preparedness for the Conference itself.

3. The upcoming election of the new CWP Chair: deadline for nominations is July 9th at midnight, UK time. A statement from each eligible candidate must be submitted to HQ by August 8th. A role description was distributed and the election rules were confirmed.

4. The last item of discussion was the recent creation (Malta, November 2015) of the *Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees (CAPAC)*, which received official recognition from CHOGM.

CONCLUSION

Ms. Mendès thoroughly enjoyed her first EXCO meeting, and firmly believes that the new Secretary General is the right person at the right time, to ensure the organisation fulfills its constitutional mandate.

The CPA is, above all else, a parliamentary democracy reinforcement organisation: **“The CPA connects, develops, promotes and supports Parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance and the implementation of the**

enduring values of the Commonwealth.”⁴ One must continue to put emphasis on this purpose, and try to collaborate with, and support the SG as best as we can.

Respectfully submitted,

Yasmin Ratansi, M.P.

Chair of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)

⁴ http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/Main/About/Statement_of_Purpose/Main/About/Organisation/

Travel Costs*

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| ASSOCIATION | Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) |
| ACTIVITY | Executive Committee Meeting (EXCO) |
| DESTINATION | London, United Kingdom |
| DATES | April 27 to 30, 2016 |
| DELEGATION | |
| SENATE | |
| HOUSE OF COMMONS | Ms. Alexandra Mendès, M.P. |
| STAFF | |
| TRANSPORTATION | \$0.00 |
| ACCOMMODATION | \$0.00 |
| HOSPITALITY | \$0.00 |
| PER DIEMS | \$0.00 |
| OFFICIAL GIFTS | \$0.00 |
| MISCELLANEOUS | \$0.00 |
| TOTAL | \$0.00 |

*All expenses reimbursed by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.